

# *Great Expectations*

*Ps 42:11*

**1**

*11a* Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?

Do you ever talk to yourself? I'm told that talking to yourself is fairly normal; it's when you start answering that it can become a problem, though there have been times that I have had whole conversations with myself. There was even one time I made myself so mad I quit talking with me for three days. Here's the thing, David is not being schizophrenic, he is speaking to his innermost feelings, thoughts, and understandings. We see this in the continuation of the verse...

*Ps 42:11*

**2**

*11b* Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

The idea of...

**3**

## *Hope in God*

This is what David is telling himself to do. He is counseling himself, if you will. He is encouraging himself, reminding himself that, in his despair there is indeed a source of help and comfort, and sometimes we just need to remember that even when our despair is such that we don't think that we can continue on, God provides a way. This may be one of the most difficult things to understand or come to grips with. Just exactly how does God strengthen and comfort? Does God somehow impart supernatural strength to us or does He remove whatever difficulties there are that are plaguing us? The answer to both questions is no, neither one of those happen. This is where we must be able to separate the physical from the spiritual. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm David says...

*Ps 23:4*

**4**

*4* Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Now David acknowledges that God provides guidance and comfort and expects God to do so, just as we should, the question is...

**5**

## *What are our expectations for that guidance and comfort?*

What I mean by that is that I think far too often people become disillusioned or disappointed in God because they don't receive the results from their prayers that they expected to receive. If someone contracts cancer and prays to God that their cancer will go into remission and or go away completely and that doesn't happen, who gets blamed? It is very much a trait of man to always seek to assign blame, and more often than not, that blame is typically on something or someone else besides themselves. A car accident occurs and the first question asked is who was at fault. I stub my toe and immediately want to know who moved the couch. The point is that sometimes there is nothing to be blamed, it may just be a circumstance of life. When faced with these circumstances where they cannot be fixed by removing the source of blame, since there is none, what do we do? Typically this is when man turns to God. God tends to represent to man that power which can combat those blameless circumstances and provide the guidance and comfort that man looks for in

times of distress or trouble. That's why I ask; what are our expectations of God? Just because someone has an unreasonable expectation about how God should answer their prayers and their expectation isn't met, they decide that God doesn't love or that He isn't good. Do you see the fallacy in that? God is never bound by our expectations, wishes, or desires. Rather, we are bound by His. Therein is the core of this discussion. Our expectations tend to be focused on this world and on the solving of the problems of this world that we encounter. David was asking for comfort from God in times that were, for him, difficult in the extreme, but all were problems of this world. He turned to God for stability. Did God make it so that those problems disappeared for David? Did all of his trials and difficulties just go away? Of course not, but God did give David the greatest comfort and guidance possible...

**6**

### ***The knowledge and assurance that God was with him***

Now, granted, for David that meant something a little different than it means for us today. In David's time God did work directly with man and this world. He did fight battles for His people, the Jews. He did speak directly with individuals, but in the final analysis, God's comfort and guidance are always found in the fact that God is with us. After the spiritual gifts had ceased, 1 Cor. 13, God no longer deals in such direct manners with man as He did then, but the dynamic is still exactly the same, comfort and guidance are to be found in the knowledge that God is with us...

**Rom 8:31**

**7**

**31** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

I recognize that it seems that I have been rambling so far, but there is a natural progression to this.

David, in his despair turned to God for the guidance and comfort that God provides. He counseled himself to place his hope in God. He did this with the understanding that God would always be there for him as long as he remained faithful and obedient to God.

David didn't have unreasonable expectations of what God would do for him. He knew that he would still have to face whatever trial or difficulty the world presented, but he had the confidence that God would be with him as he faced those trials. And, ultimately, he knew that by placing his confidence, faith, trust in God's Word, he would be rewarded with an eternal life that would have no trials.

**Ps 16:9-11**

**8**

**9** Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. **10** For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. **11** You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

We understand that this is a messianic prophecy concerning the raising of Christ from the grave as seen in Peter's sermon in Acts 2, where in verses 25-28 Peter quotes this passage in reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, yes, this is a prophecy pointing towards Christ but in it I think we also see that David had a certain trust and confidence for his own future of being given an eternal life of joy.

This brings us back to our original question...

9

## *What are our expectations for that guidance and comfort?*

The answer to that question lies in understanding the difference between this world, the physical, and the spiritual realm where is God, Christ, the Word, the Church. The things of God are spiritual and when we have that understanding it helps us to better understand what our expectations should be.

*John 4:24*

10

24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The first part of that verse, "God is a spirit," is not that difficult to understand. God is not physical in nature, He is not a part of this world, He is the creator of it. He is the power that holds it in place, and He is the wisdom that governs it. He is not part of it. Most that are religious have no problem with understanding this point, it is the following ideas that create problems for people. If we are to worship God in spirit and truth, just what does that mean? This is an excerpt from the Jamieson, Fausset, Brown commentary...

11

*God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and [in] truth. 'As God is a Spirit, so He both invites and demands a spiritual worship.*

Therein is a primary difference between the Old Law and the New. The Old Law was a Law of worldly deed, sacrifices, cleansings, ceremony, feasts, things the Jews had to perform. Now the intent of that Law was to bring them to the understanding that John 4:24 is speaking to; that our worship of God is to be spiritual in nature. The Jews got caught up in the doing of the deeds and lost sight of the fact that God is a spirit. That is what Jesus is telling them in the Sermon on the Mount. Yes, God gave you these deeds to do, but those deeds were intended to bring them to a spiritual understanding of God. Their worship was to have been from an attitude of love towards God and His Word. But their worship became worldly, consisting of deeds without love. That's what Paul warns against in the passage we referred to earlier in 1 Cor. 13. Spiritual worship does have elements of deeds involved, but those deeds without love, our attitude towards God, are empty, with no meaning. The New Law emphasizes that love, our attitudes, in the worship of God.

*1 Cor 13:13*

12

13 But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Here is the real point. The deeds of the Law of Moses meant nothing without the love for God. The loving attitude of the New Law also means nothing without the deeds that God commands. In a passage that I use constantly...

*John 14:15*

13

15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

I use this so much because Christ so elegantly combines the two thoughts, love and obedience. Spiritual worship of God is found in that union, and you can't worship God in spirit without both.

That illustrates for us an important point; there is a definite distinction between this world and the spiritual realm of God.

In his self-encouragement David speaks to this distinction. I would like to follow, the best I can, David's statement in Psalms 42. There are three points he makes...

- 14** 1) "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me?"  
2) "Hope in God"  
3) "I shall praise Him who is the health of my countenance, God"

- 15** 1) "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me?"

This first thought is one we have all faced, and probably on many more than one occasion. When the difficulties of this life become such that they seem so insurmountable, the fear, the worry, the stress become such a burden that they weigh us down and we find ourselves where David has found himself, depressed, disturbed.

**1 Peter 5:6-7**

**16**

**6** Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, **7** casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

God never promises peace, in this world. He promises that when we put our faith and trust in Him and His promise to us of a future life eternal, that we will can and will find a comfort in this life and in the face of the trials of this life.

**Rom 8:38-39**

**17**

**38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What a great source of comfort that thought should be to everyone. And note what Christ says in...

**John 16:32-33**

**18**

**32** "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. **33** "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Christ here tells his disciples that even though they would be scattered from Him, He would not be alone because the Father was with Him, and He tells the disciples that in Him, in God, peace can be found. Not a removal of the distress of the world but a new direction of focus that takes our eyes off of the distress and puts them on God, the only true source of peace.

This brings us to David's next thought...

- 19** 2) "Hope in God"

In...

**Jer 29:11**

**20**

11 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah speaks of God's desire to keep man from calamity and to give him a future. If that is not necessarily in this world and life, then when or where is it?

**1 Cor 15:54-57**

**21**

54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul talks about the when and where here in 1 Cor.. The hope that all men can have in Christ Jesus is that they don't have to face eternal death but can rather find the peace and comfort of eternal life. Sin demands death, spiritual death, Christ paid that price so that any and all who will can escape the sting of that death through the victory that is found in Jesus Christ.

And there is David's third point...

**22**

3) "I shall praise Him who is the health of my countenance, God"

**Rom 15:13**

**23**

13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God is the God of hope, the only source of true hope that man can find for it is only in God that man can receive remission from the penalty of his sin and escape the sting of eternal death that sin brings.

What are your expectations of God? What do you think He should give you? What do expect to receive when you pray?

If our expectations and desires are rooted in this world, chances are pretty good that we will be disappointed.

But when we worship God in spirit according to His spiritual word then we come into contact with the blood of Christ which cleanses us of our sin and we are free from the penalty of death, eternal damnation.

What are our expectations?

We can expect to go to heaven, if we will but worship God in spirit and truth. And isn't that the definition of HOPE?

**24**

### ***Desired Expectation***

**Heb 11:1-2**

**25**

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval.